

branch continues to implement my policy of maintaining the number of advisory committees within the ceiling of 534 required by Executive Order 12838 of February 10, 1993. As a result, the number of discretionary advisory committees (established under general congressional authorizations) was held to 467, or 42 percent fewer than those 801 committees in existence at the beginning of my Administration.

Through the advisory committee planning process required by Executive Order 12838, the total number of advisory committees specifically mandated by statute has declined. The 391 such groups supported at the end of fiscal year 1997 represents a 4 percent decrease over the 407 in existence at the end of fiscal year 1996. Compared to the 439 advisory committees mandated by statute at the beginning of my Administration, the net total for fiscal year 1997 reflects an 11 percent decrease since 1993.

Furthermore, my Administration will assure that the total estimated costs to fund these groups in fiscal year 1998, or \$43.8 million, are dedicated to support the highest priority public involvement efforts. We will continue to work with the Congress to assure that all advisory committees that are required by statute are regularly reviewed through the congressional reauthorization process and that any such new committees proposed through legislation are closely linked to national interests.

Combined savings achieved through actions taken by the executive branch to eliminate unneeded advisory committees during fiscal year 1997 were \$2.7 million, including \$545,000 saved through the termination of five advisory committees established under Presidential authority.

During fiscal year 1997, my Administration successfully worked with the Congress to clarify further the applicability of FACA to committees sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA). This initiative resulted in the enactment of the Federal Advisory Committee Act Amendments of 1997 (Public Law 105-153), which I signed into law on December 17, 1997. The Act provides for new and important means for the public and other inter-

ested stakeholders to participate in activities undertaken by committees established by the Academies in support of executive branch decisionmaking processes.

As FACA enters its second quarter-century during fiscal year 1998, it is appropriate for both the Congress and my Administration to continue examining opportunities for strengthening the Act's role in encouraging and promoting public participation. Accordingly, I am asking the Administrator of General Services to prepare a legislative proposal for my consideration that addresses an overall policy framework for leveraging the public's role in Federal decisionmaking through a wide variety of mechanisms, including advisory committees.

By jointly pursuing this goal, we can fortify what has been a uniquely American approach toward collaboration. As so aptly noted by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* (1835), "In democratic countries knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all the others." This observation strongly resonates at this moment in our history as we seek to combine policy opportunities with advances in collaboration made possible by new technologies, and an increased desire of the Nation's citizens to make meaningful contributions to their individual communities and their country.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 14, 1998.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting the Comprehensive
National Energy Strategy**
July 14, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit the Comprehensive National Energy Strategy (Strategy) to the Congress. This report required by section 801 of the Department of Energy Organization Act (Public Law 95-91; 42 U.S.C. 7321(b)), highlights our national energy policy. It contains specific objectives and plans for meeting five essential, common sense goals enumerated in the accompanying message from Secretary Peña.

Energy is a global commodity of strategic importance. It is also a key contributor to our economic performance, and its production and use affect the environment in many ways. Thus, affordable, adequate, and environmentally benign supplies of energy are critical to our Nation's economic, environmental, and national security.

The Strategy reflects the emergence and interconnection of three preeminent challenges in the late 1990s: how to maintain energy security in increasingly globalized energy markets; how to harness competition in energy markets both here and abroad; and how to respond to local and global environmental concerns, including the threat of climate change. The need for research and development underlies the Strategy, which incorporates recommendations of my Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) for improvements in energy technologies that will enable the United States to address our energy-related challenges. Advances in energy technology can strengthen our economy, reduce our vulnerability to oil shocks, lower the cost of energy to consumers, and cut emissions of air pollutants as well as greenhouse gases.

This Strategy was developed over several months in an open process. Three public hearings were held earlier this year in California, Texas, and Washington, D.C., and more than 300 public comments were received. This Strategy is not a static document; its specifics can be modified to reflect evolving conditions, while the framework provides policy guidance into the 21st century. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to implement the Strategy and to achieve its goals in the most effective manner possible.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 14, 1998.

**Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion
on the Patients' Bill of Rights**
July 15, 1998

The President. Hello, everybody. I'd like to make a very brief opening statement, beginning with expressing my thanks to

whoever's about to turn that tape recorder off. [Laughter] I'd like to thank Dr. Dickey, Dr. Smoak, Dr. Anderson, and all the people at the AMA for having us. I thank the members of our roundtable for joining us, including Secretary Shalala, Secretary Herman, Secretary West, Dr. Kizer, the director of the health agency at the VA. And I want to say to the members of the press who are here, I am joined today by patients and their families, by doctors, nurses, and other health care providers who have widely different experiences and perspectives, but all agree that we very badly need a Patients' Bill of Rights.

More than 160 million Americans are in managed care today. At best, the system can drive health care costs down and make health care more affordable and accessible for more Americans. We should all be encouraged representing at best that a coalition of 25 progressive HMO's this week endorsed the Patients' Bill of Rights. But as we will hear in a few minutes, at its worst, managed care can also dehumanize health care, hamstringing doctors' decisions, alienating patients, even endangering lives.

In an increasingly complicated health care system we need a simple standard. Traditional care or managed care, all Americans are entitled to quality care. That is why in my State of the Union Address I asked Congress to put progress ahead of partisanship and to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights.

To do our part to meet this challenge, I signed an Executive order back in February to extend the protections of the Patients' Bill of Rights to 85 million Americans in Federal health plans. Today we're taking further action. I am pleased to announce that the Department of Veterans Affairs, which provides health services to more than 3 million veterans, is putting in place a new procedure to help those veterans appeal health decisions, one of the most important protections in our Patients' Bill of Rights, and I thank Secretary West for that action.

To ensure, however, that every American is protected by a Patients' Bill of Rights, Congress has to act. In the remaining days left in this legislative session, once again I ask Congress to pass a strong and enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights that guarantees access to specialists so that people with cancer,